

Meeting with SD Support Staff

Re:

SHD Internal Assessment and Strategic

Planning Process:

December 14, 2012, 2:30PM/December 28, 2012, 9:30AM

I. Pre-Hearing Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

1. Issue: **County SOP Problems:** There are problems with counties providing SOPs on the day of the hearings or not preparing them for the hearings. San Bernardino and Riverside Counties do not work with the support staff to resolve problems.
 - a) Cases have to be postponed because the county representative is on vacation and did not prepare the SOP before leaving.
 - b) There is difficulty with county cooperation to get problems resolved.
 - c) It may be that the counties have resource issues that exacerbate problems.
 - d) The counties fail to give advance notice of cases postponed.
 - e) Claimants are sometimes confused about where to pick up their SOPs in advance of the hearing date. They sometimes come to this office and we have to tell them to go to the county. This may be a county notice problem.
2. Issue: Counties take CWDs and don't provide notice to the SD office. If an interpreter is involved, the interpreter shows up needlessly and we have to pay the minimum fee and transportation costs.
3. Issue: Why are Spanish Interpreters being used who must travel from Riverside to San Marcos to do hearings? It seems we should be using local interpreters, particularly when the language is Spanish.
4. Issue: When the native language of the Claimant is one of the more exotic languages, we have to postpone the case several times because no tele-interpreter is available.
 - a) Why can't we use the county's interpreter? The county must have an interpreter available to discuss its action with the claimant pre-hearing.
5. Issue: There are problems with calls to Customer Service/Rehearing Unit.
 - a) For example, not knowing who the contact to get recycled envelopes, Customer Service was called and the call was forwarded to Eugene who not informed of the purpose of the call.
 - b) Calls to management in Customer Service are not returned or there is a delayed response.
 - c) There needs to be a listing of who to contact for assistance with specified matters-a functional organization chart is needed.

- d) Reference was made to a video meeting that did not occur because management forgot about it.
- e) Reference was made to the confusion within Rehearings about calls from SDRO and SD Co. It seems that the Rehearing Unit staff fails to distinguish these separate units when answering calls.

II. Hearing Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

- 1. Issue: When the ALJ leaves the record open to receive additional information from the county, SD County tells the claimant to pick up the evidence at this office. The county should be providing a copy to the claimant, particularly when the evidence is voluminous.

III. Post-Hearing Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

- 1. Issue: ALJ Decision release date-While ALJs say they never tell claimants a time when the decision will be sent, staff occasionally do get calls.
- 2. Issue: Rewards-Staff feel like they are treated as stepchildren by other units in the division. This results in communication problems.
 - a) There are not enough positions in the SD office so staff has no promotional opportunities. Consequently they will have to leave in order to promote. Furthermore, the private sector pays more.
 - b) There was some discussion about establishing 3 hubs (SD, LA, SAC) or adding a Southern call center. This could create some promotional opportunities depending on how they are organized and reporting relationships.
- 3. Issue: Rehearing File Access-When the staff gives the case record to the ALJ to conduct the rehearing, they have no access to the file documents. SD Co. has asked for the claimant rehearing request and SHD grant letters which are difficult to get from the ALJ.
 - a) Staff recommend that the request and grant letter be placed in the secure file so the staff and county will have access.
 - b) SD Co. should be getting those letters so there is a need to follow-up to resolve the problem.

IV. Other Topic, Issues and Recommendations:

- 1. Issue: Training.
 - a) There is a need for a training plan for new and journey support staff.
 - b) Staff should be cross-trained on all phases of jobs so there is back-up when absences or vacancies occur.
 - c) There should be an exchange of staff from SD to Sac and Sac to SD to facilitate a better understanding of roles and responsibilities of the two offices.
 - d) Customer Service Management from Sacramento should come to SD to discuss issues and problems of communication. This request was reiterated at the follow-up meeting.

2. Issue: Case Record Labels-Staff believe they should have access to getting the labels.
3. Issue: Filling the vacant OT position and promotional opportunities.
 - a) Staff expressed a preference that the vacant OT position should be filled with someone who is a north county resident. Filling the position with a south county or out-of-county resident, due to travel costs, results in a revolving door as the new people leave for closer employment and greater promotional opportunities.
 - b) Staff expressed interest in elevating promotional opportunities at the MST and Analyst levels.
 - c) In response, staff was informed that OT recruitment was under way but there were SROA implications as to north v. south residency issues. As to promotional opportunities, the staff was told that due to the relative small size of the SDRO, there were limits on classification upgrades. However, on the table for consideration which could impact the size of the office are; southern call center and possible expansion of the SDRO if data supports it and/or more favorable recruitment opportunities exist in that region.
 - d) As to the present number of support staff, and to support an increase in staff, a question was asked about what functions were previously done but are not now done by the support staff.
 - 1) Compliance liaison in disputes between the county and claimant concerning the compliance report.
 - 2) Return calendars-they don't update HWDC.
 - 3) Scheduling.
 - 4) Interpreter assignment.
 - 5) Staff indicated that there were 5 support positions in the office when these functions were performed and would support some promotional opportunity.
4. Issue: Support Manual is outdated and of little use.
 - a) There is a need to update the Support Manual, provide training as to its use, and make sure everyone's expectations and use are in conformity with its provisions.
5. Issue: Interpersonal relationships-support vs ALJ.
 - a) ALJs need to understand that support staff work for the ALJ must be adjusted when heavy workload demands occur in the office. Support staff is short handed and there are days when the work is overwhelming.
 - b) Some ALJs seem to expect the support staff to be their personal secretaries. ALJs need to view the relationship as a team effort. Expectations need to be defined as to ALJ to Support and Support to ALJ. Protocols need to be established as to work (i.e. decisions submitted on a flow basis instead of being dumped at one time) and procedure priorities, cross-training and back-up.
6. Issue: IPV/ADH closed cases-For some reason, when an ALJ hears one of these cases and prepares the decision, when the staff attempt to up-date the HWDC, they discover the case has been closed out.
 - a) Staff submitted case names and case numbers as examples and these were forwarded to Customer Service management for attention.

7. Issue: Texting-There are no standards for texting abbreviations adding confusions as to what was the meaning of the message.
 - a) A glossary is needed to define abbreviations for words, phrases and acronyms.